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**OXFORD HIGH SCHOOL STANDOUT NAMED
GATORADE® ALABAMA FOOTBALL PLAYER OF THE YEAR**

CHICAGO (December 5, 2013) — In its 29th year of honoring the nation's best high school athletes, The Gatorade Company, in collaboration with USA TODAY High School Sports, today announced Racean 'Roc' Thomas of Oxford High School as its 2013-14 Gatorade Alabama Football Player of the Year. Thomas is the first Gatorade Alabama Football Player of the Year to be chosen from Oxford High School.

The award, which recognizes not only outstanding athletic excellence, but also high standards of academic achievement and exemplary character demonstrated on and off the field, distinguishes Thomas as Alabama's best high school football player. Now a finalist for the prestigious Gatorade National Football Player of the Year award announced in December, Thomas joins an elite alumni association of past state award-winners in 12 sports, including Mark Sanchez (2004-05, Mission Viejo HS, Calif.), Wes Welker (1999-00, Heritage Hall HS, Okla.), Terrell Suggs (1999-00, Hamilton HS, Ariz.), Anquan Boldin (1998-99, Pahokee HS, Fla.) and Jerome Bettis (1989-90, Mackenzie HS, Mich.).

The 5-foot-11, 200-pound senior running back rushed for 2,211 yards and 32 touchdowns on 226 carries, averaging 9.8 yards per rush this past season and leading the Yellow Jackets (9-3) to the Class 6A state quarterfinals. A 2013 Under Armour All-American, Thomas was a 2012 Class 6A First Team All-State selection. He concluded his prep football career with 6,169 rushing yards and 82 touchdowns.

Thomas has maintained a B average in the classroom. A member of the Oxford High graphic arts club, he has designed multiple logos and bulletins used by the Oxford City School System.

"Roc Thomas is a once-in-a-lifetime player," said Brooks Dampeer, head coach of Pell City High. "The thing that makes him so tough to tackle is that he fights defenders as they try to bring him down. I've never seen one player have as much impact on one team as he does."

Thomas has verbally committed to play football on an athletic scholarship at Auburn University beginning in the fall of 2014.

The [Gatorade Player of the Year](#) program annually recognizes one winner in the District of Columbia and each of the 50 states that sanction high school football, girls volleyball, boys and girls cross country, boys and girls basketball, boys and girls soccer, baseball, softball, and boys and girls track & field, and awards one National Player of the Year in each sport. The selection process is administered by the Gatorade high school sports leadership team in partnership with [USA TODAY High School Sports](#), which work with top sport-specific experts and a media advisory board of accomplished, veteran prep sports journalists to determine the state winners in each sport.

Thomas joins recent Gatorade Alabama Football Players of the Year Nick Mullens (2012-2013, Spain Park High School), Jameis Winston (2011-12, Hueytown High School), Jamal Golden (2010-11, Wetumpka High School), Coty Blanchard (2009-10, Cherokee County), Clint Moseley (2008-09, Leroy High School) and Julio Jones (2007-08, Foley) among the state's list of former award winners.

To keep up to date on the latest happenings, become a fan of Gatorade Player of the Year on Facebook and follow us on Twitter. For more on the Gatorade Player of the Year program, including nomination information, a complete list of past winners and the announcement of the Gatorade National Player of the Year, visit www.gatorade.com/poy.

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